Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans

Purpose
This Factsheet provides information about the types of programs, counselling services, information and support activities available for sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans through the VVCS – Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service.

Background
In response to findings of the Vietnam Veterans Health Study (1998), VVCS has implemented a number of initiatives for sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans.

These initiatives have increased VVCS’s capacity to address mental health needs of sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans through:
- Developing partnerships with local services to ensure that sons and daughters receive appropriate care;
- Supporting the self-help initiatives of sons and daughters; and
- Programs which aim to increase personal strengths, coping skills and resilience of sons and daughters.

Can a veteran’s war-related stress impact on their sons and daughters?

While family life has been positive for the majority of sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans, there are some for whom family relationships have been challenging.

After returning from war service a number of veterans experienced higher than normal stress in their daily lives associated with their war experience. This may have led to difficulties in problem-solving and conflict resolution and low self-confidence which impacted on their capacity to be a successful parent. Some veterans continue to experience mental health problems complicated by alcohol or drug abuse, anxiety or depression.

Thankfully, many Vietnam veterans have successfully sought help, recovered and maintain good relationships with their children and grandchildren.

Living with a parent experiencing these types of problems can have an impact on children as they are growing up. Some sons and daughters have experienced a difficult family life leading to feelings of social and emotional isolation, sadness, anger, aggression, shame, disappointment, a low sense of safety, self-blame and feeling overly responsible for other people. These feelings and attitudes can lead to relationship and mental health difficulties.
Services for Sons and Daughters of Vietnam Veterans, continued

Some sons and daughters require support (e.g. information, referral to appropriate services, counselling) in their efforts to change these feelings, attitudes and behaviours. Others have developed their own ways of coping with the kinds of problems they may have encountered.

VVCS consulted with sons and daughters in to work out the best ways to develop mental health promotion activities that will increase their strengths, skills and ability to bounce back. Sons and daughters have shared their experiences with VVCS and have clearly expressed what works and what does not work.

Who can use VVCS?

- Dependent children of all veterans, deployed peacekeepers with issues arising from their parents’ service.
- All sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans and F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers with issues relating to their parents’ service.

If you are unsure about your eligibility, call VVCS on 1800 011 046.

How can VVCS help?

VVCS can assist sons and daughters to get access to a range of services and programs that may be of assistance, such as:
- Individual, couples and family counselling
- After-hours telephone crisis counselling through Veterans Line
- Case management services including referrals to other services
- Psychiatric assessments
- Group programs for common mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, anger and sleep management
- Information, education and self-help resources.

Information, education and self-help resources

Sons and daughters can contact VVCS individually for information or advice. VVCS understands that many sons and daughters may not need or want counselling, but sometimes they do want information about services available in the community, or other specific advice associated with their parent’s war-related experience.

VVCS has resources available including brochures, books and other written materials for sons and daughters which might help them better understand their situation.

Free confidential counselling

Free, confidential VVCS counselling is available to the sons or daughters of veterans to help work though issues relating to their parents’ service. VVCS has 15 centres nationally and also engages a range of outreach counsellors who can work with sons and daughters in rural and remote areas or for those in circumstances where accessing a VVCS centre is difficult.
VVCS is committed to preserving and upholding your rights to privacy and confidentiality. Please see factsheet VCS01 General Information about VVCS for further information about VVCS counselling, confidentiality, and client rights and responsibilities.

Group Programs

VVCS centres across Australia offer group programs to address issues such as anger management, assertiveness, communication, problem-solving, developing relationships and prevention of mental health issues. More information on VVCS group programs can be found at: www.dva.gov.au/vvcs

These groups require a minimum number of participants and may not be available in every region. Sons and daughters should contact their nearest VVCS centre to register their interest in a group program.

VVCS is also able to provide up-to-date information about relevant group programs that are being organised by other agencies. VVCS can assist sons and daughters by putting them in touch with the best program to suit their needs.

Referrals to VVCS

Referrals to VVCS can be made by:
- Sons and daughters themselves; and
- Other health, welfare and educational professionals with your consent.

If you are unsure whether you are eligible for VVCS services, please contact your local VVCS office for information and advice on 1800 011 046.

Referrals from VVCS

VVCS has developed strong connections with government and community-based agencies in most regions of Australia. If needed, VVCS can provide information about agencies that offer specialist counselling (e.g. for drug and alcohol problems and other addictions).

Psychiatric assessments

If a VVCS counsellor determines that a son or daughter of a Vietnam veteran requires further specialist assessment, VVCS can arrange for a psychiatric assessment. VVCS will pay for a maximum of five psychiatric assessment sessions.

Information, education and self-help resources

Sons and daughters can also contact VVCS for information or advice. VVCS understands that many sons and daughters may not need, or want, counselling, but sometimes they do
want information about services available in the community, or other specific advice associated with their parent's military service. VVCS has a range of resources that may assist sons and daughters to better understand their situation, including brochures and books.

Other counselling options

Alternatively, sons and daughters can refer themselves to other counselling services that may be available in their region. Access to counselling can be obtained through:

- Referral by a GP to a psychologist;
- Local community health services;
- State health department drug and alcohol and mental health services;
- Specific youth services; and
- A range of agencies that are available in each State and Territory, such as Centacare, Anglicare and Relationships Australia.

If sons and daughters prefer to use a telephone or online counselling service they can contact counsellors at:

- Lifeline (general crisis support): 13 11 14 / www.lifeline.org.au
- Kids Help Line (for teens and young adults): 1800 551 800 / www.kidshelpline.com.au

Other counselling organisations located online, include:

- Relationships Australia (relationship guidance and resources): www.relationships.org.au
- Beyond Blue (depression and mental health resources): www.beyondblue.org.au
- Reach Out (mental health support and resources): www.reachout.com.au

Community based self-help and support groups

Sons and daughters can also join a range of self-help groups that may be available in their community, such as:

- Al Anon or Al Ateen if affected by a family member’s substance abuse;
- Association for the Friends and Relatives of the Mentally Ill (AFRMI) and Children of Parents with a Mental Illness (COPMI) if affected by a family member’s mental health issues.

There are many other self-help groups that may be available for specific issues such as eating disorders, grief, a range of medical conditions, parenting, employment or financial issues, stress management and so on.

Doctors, community health services, and VVCS staff can provide contacts for support groups in each region of Australia.
Who can use VVCS?

The following people can use VVCS:

- Australian veterans of all conflicts, deployed peacekeepers, and F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers
- Partners and ex-partners (within 5 years of separation) of members who have had an eligible deployment
- Sons and daughters of Vietnam veterans and F-111 fuel tank maintenance workers of any age, with issues relating to their parents’ service
- Dependent children of all other veterans and deployed peacekeepers up to the age of 26, with issues relating to their parents’ service
- War widows/ers
- Ex-serving members with a DVA-accepted mental health disability, along with their partners and dependent children up to the age of 26, and
- Current serving ADF members on referral from the ADF under an Agreement for Services.

DVA entitlement is not required to access VVCS but eligibility to use the service will be verified. If you have any questions about eligibility to access VVCS please contact your nearest VVCS centre on 1800 011 046.

How do I contact VVCS?

Contact VVCS by calling: **1800 011 046***

During business hours this number will connect you to the nearest VVCS Centre – there are 15 VVCS centres located across Australia. After business hours this number will connect you to Veterans Line, the VVCS after-hours telephone crisis counselling service.

* Calls from landlines to VVCS are free, calls from some mobile networks and payphones may incur charges.

Alternatively, you can contact your nearest centre direct:

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Adelaide</strong></td>
<td>(08) 7422 4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maroochydore</strong></td>
<td>(07) 5479 3992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Albury/Wodonga</strong></td>
<td>(02) 6056 1341</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Melbourne</strong></td>
<td>(03) 8640 8700</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Brisbane</strong></td>
<td>(07) 3303 9433</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Newcastle</strong></td>
<td>(02) 4915 0420</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Canberra</strong></td>
<td>(02) 6225 4620</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Perth</strong></td>
<td>(08) 6461 7800</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Darwin</strong></td>
<td>(08) 8927 9411</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Southport</strong></td>
<td>(07) 5630 0204</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hobart</strong></td>
<td>(03) 6221 6777</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sydney</strong></td>
<td>(02) 9761 5000</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Launceston</strong></td>
<td>(03) 6331 7500</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Townsville</strong></td>
<td>(07) 4723 9155</td>
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Other Factsheets

Other Factsheets related to this topic include:
- General information about VVCS: VCS 01
- Combat Experience in Vietnam and its Effects: VCS 02
- Effects of military-related service on relationships: VCS 04
- Domestic Violence: VCS 05
- PTSD: General Information: VCS 06
- Services for Sons and Daughters of Veterans: VCS 09
- Operation Life – Suicide Prevention Workshops: VCS 12
- Education Schemes MRC 47
- The Long Tan Bursary: GS 13
- Vietnam Veterans' Sons and Daughters Support Program: CSP 01

Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA relating to complex or important matters.

More information

All DVA Factsheets are available on DVA offices and on the DVA website at www.dva.gov.au

To access self-help resources visit www.at-ease.dva.gov.au

DVA General Enquiries telephone number: 133 254 (metro) or FreeCall 1800 555 254 (regional callers).

Note: * Use a normal landline phone if you can. Mobile phone calls may cost you more. Local call rates vary depending on your phone service provider.

You can send an email to VVCS at: vvcsfeedback@dva.gov.au

You can get more help from any DVA office.